

---

## WARNING!

The views expressed in FMSO publications and reports are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

---

# The Drug Threat: Getting Priorities Straight

by Mr. William W. Mendel  
and Murl D. Munger  
Foreign Military Studies Office, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

---

**This article originally published in *Parameters*  
The US Army War College Quarterly, Vol. XXVII, No. 2, pp. 110-124**

---

*The General frowned as he read the Newsweek article, wondering why the Congress seemed so determined to expand the role of the military into operations other than war, beyond the pale of established ways of defending the nation against foreign threats. Now both Senate and House leaders wanted greater military involvement in the drug war. Finishing his reading, he half-muttered, 'If we must have distractions like Somalia, Haiti, Rwanda, and Bosnia, then they shouldn't expect us to do more counterdrug support. The budgets are too tight. Don't they know how we've downsized? Don't they realize the military isn't designed for law enforcement or social engineering? The nation already has a DEA and the Salvation Army. Let us be soldiers, not cops or welfare workers. "Buried deep in his psyche was the idea, "We exist to 'kill people and break things' when fighting our nation 's wars. That's what soldiering is all about."<sup>1</sup>*

Perhaps this fictitious general has a point. Why should the military be involved in the drug war at all? In a period of diminished resources, defense leaders are drawn to primary interests: preparing the force for warfighting contingencies, such as responding to an attack on Middle East oil supplies, or intervening in a new conflict in Korea. Military leaders have been contending with distracting commitments since shortly after the end of the Cold War.<sup>2</sup> Continual support for operations other than war carries the potential for diminishing our momentum for shaping and sustaining the warfighting force.

Those critical of military involvement in counterdrug activities muster a number of now-familiar arguments. They point out that the military services have been supporting the nation's campaign against drug trafficking and drug abuse since the early 1980s. They argue that large expenditures of money and manpower have produced little measurable success in reducing the amount of drugs on the street. With all the current and projected demands on our smaller military forces, they question whether we should continue to set aside scarce resources to support foreign and domestic drug law enforcement agencies. Some critics also contend that fighting drug trafficking is not a proper military role, that it may infringe on human rights, and that it could induce corruption in the ranks. Other serious observations are that it is inherently a "no-win" mission that can reduce public confidence in the military, and that it is a mission that could become a bottomless pit for men and resources.<sup>3</sup>

Another viewpoint, however, may be more compelling. Based not only on comparative threat assessments but also on the social and political realities of the decade, this viewpoint contends that the legitimate use of military forces as an element of national power need not be confined to conventional military-on-military conflict. Rather, the use of military force should be considered whenever the nation is severely threatened by any circumstance to which no adequate response is possible solely with civilian forces or resources. Moreover, for many units and unit personnel, wartime mission requirements are virtually identical to those of counterdrug missions. Readiness for wartime can often be increased by participation in real-world counterdrug operations. To advocates of this viewpoint, the answer to questions about whether the military should become more or less involved in counterdrug activities lies in a deeper question of what is best for the nation.

Those who argue for greater military involvement point out that three American Presidents have declared the drug trade a threat to US national security. President Reagan signed a National Security Decision Directive to that effect, and President Bush reaffirmed it in 1989, when the US Congress concurred and financed the Administration's "War on Drugs." President Clinton restated this theme in Presidential Decision Directives, gave Cabinet rank to the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, and made him a member of the National Security Council.

The Congress has repeatedly stated its concern about the widespread effects of the drug problem and has backed the past three administrations with legislative and financial support. The examples of Mexico, Colombia, and Peru and other foreign nations afflicted by the growing political and economic influence of drug traffickers affirm the dangers in allowing the problem to grow. Democracy is undermined, bribery and corruption abound, justice is thwarted, criminal violence is rampant, and public confidence in elected and appointed officials is weakened. Similar trends are appearing in varying degrees in the United States.

This article explores a number of propositions related to the roles of US military forces in the war on drugs. They include an assessment of our current level of involvement in counterdrug support as a function of what we believe to be the threat, leading to the question of whether we need more or less military support to the counterdrug strategy. The article concludes that we should increase the tempo of military counterdrug support and reconsider our force design for supporting the counterdrug strategy.

### ***Magnitude of the Drug Threat***

A strong argument can be made that the United States is facing a threat as dangerous to its national well-being and moral fiber as anything encountered in the past 200 years. During 1995, some 20 million Americans, about one in nine of our citizens, used some form of illicit drug; 12.8 million of those can be termed regular drug users.<sup>4</sup> Between 1992 and 1995, the rate of increase in drug use by teenagers more than doubled.<sup>5</sup> Early reports for 1996 show the trend is still increasing. There are well-established links among drug use and crime and violence. In a 1994 survey under the Drug Use Forecasting Program, 66 percent of adult arrestees tested positive for use of at least one drug at the time of arrest.<sup>6</sup> The demand for drugs has created a climate of fear in many neighborhoods; drug-related violence and crime are not only prevalent in

large cities, but have spread to small towns and rural areas as well. Citizens are demanding greater protection--yet combating drug-related crime is already overtaxing both our criminal justice system and our jails.

Our health care system is in danger of being overburdened. Those who use drugs by sharing contaminated needles spread the AIDS virus and other diseases. Those who seek medical and psychological rehabilitation to free themselves from drug addiction are draining assets that could be used to treat people with disorders unrelated to drugs.

We cannot deny that the situation is serious and expensive; conservative estimates from the Office of National Drug Control Policy indicate that each year:

- Americans spend about \$49 billion buying illegal drugs.
- Federal, state, and local governments collectively spend \$30 billion in supply and demand reduction efforts and in dealing with related problems.
- The social cost of drug-related crime is \$67 billion.
- There are 25,000 drug-related deaths of US citizens and hundreds of thousands of babies exposed to illicit drugs *in utero*.<sup>7</sup>

There are other indirect costs as well. Business and industrial leaders are aware that drug abuse is reducing their profits through lost efficiency and diminished productivity, accidents, medical expense, absenteeism, and theft by employees to support their habits. Studies have shown that drug users are three-and-a-half times more likely to be involved in a plant accident than non-users; they are five times more likely to file a worker's compensation claim; they receive three times the average level of sick benefits; and they function at roughly 67 percent of their work potential.<sup>8</sup> This type of employee behavior results in enormous indirect losses to the economy each year.

No nation, even one as strong as the United States, can long afford to lose over \$146 billion annually from its economy. Neither can it indefinitely absorb the level of damage to its social institutions that is now being inflicted by the trafficking and use of illegal drugs.

Though we can calculate the economic costs, we can never quantify the toll in human misery that drug abuse and drug trafficking have wrought. Though most know drugs can be deadly, few realize that over 200,000 Americans have died from the effects of illicit drugs in the past decade. In comparison, about 34,000 Americans were killed in action during the Korean War and 47,000 killed in action during the more than ten years we fought in Vietnam.<sup>9</sup> These comparisons put in perspective the magnitude of America's drug problem; they should bolster the nation and its military in their commitment to the objectives of the National Drug Control Strategy.

### ***The National Drug Control Strategy***

To counter the drug threat, in 1988 Congress directed that a National Drug Control Strategy be produced by the President and that annual updates be submitted for congressional review. Each issue of the strategy, prepared by the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, represents the judgment, priorities, and commitments of the President regarding illicit drug control. Current priorities are treatment, prevention, domestic law enforcement, and interdiction and international initiatives.<sup>10</sup>

In meeting these drug policy priorities, the 1997 National Drug Control Strategy identifies five goals:

- Educate America's youth to reject illegal drugs as well as alcohol and tobacco.
- Increase the safety of America's citizens by reducing drug crime and violence.
- Reduce health, welfare, and crime costs resulting from illegal drug use.
- Shield America's air, land, and sea frontiers from the drug threat.
- Break foreign and domestic sources of supply.

These goals require efforts to reduce both supply and demand, and the US military can contribute by deed and example to their attainment. A total of \$16 billion was requested by the Clinton Administration for drug control efforts during FY 1998. Of this amount, \$5.5 billion is targeted toward meeting demand-reduction goals; \$8.4 billion for domestic law enforcement; \$1.6 billion toward interdiction goals; and \$488 million for international goals.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Department of Defense Counterdrug Missions***

Every Secretary of Defense from Caspar Weinberger to William Perry has viewed the drug problem as a threat to national security and has committed the US military to supporting counterdrug efforts by law enforcement agencies to the extent permissible under law. Secretary William Cohen will likely do the same. In 1989, former Secretary Dick Cheney directed the department to support the drug war because drugs pose a direct threat to the sovereignty and security of the country. His letter to the combatant commanders made it clear that DOD counterdrug support was a high-priority national security mission of the Department of Defense.<sup>12</sup> More recently, former Secretary Perry expressed his support for an aggressive and results-oriented DOD counterdrug program. Under the supervision of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (who carries the additional duty of DOD Coordinator for Drug Enforcement Policy and Support), the Defense Department has established five counterdrug mission areas. These are:

- Provide counterdrug training, operational, and materiel support to drug-source and drug-transit nations.
- Support the domestic efforts of the US drug law enforcement community.

- Give special support to the international cocaine strategy of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

- Detect and monitor the air and sea illicit drug transportation networks.

- Assist with the demand-reduction strategy in local communities and within DoD.<sup>13</sup>

The DOD counterdrug budget for fiscal year 1997 is \$808 million, most of which will be spent on US domestic programs to detect and interdict the flow of illicit drugs intended for US consumers. DOD personnel provide training, administrative support, and logistical support to US drug law enforcement agencies in all 50 states and especially along our borders with Mexico and Canada. They are involved in detecting and monitoring sea and air transportation through the Caribbean, the Atlantic, and the Pacific; and they assist in operating counterdrug command and control networks.

International support activities in countries such as Colombia, Bolivia, Peru, Mexico, the Bahamas, and others account for one fifth of the \$808 million. Nearly 90 percent of this international support funding is spent on operations and maintenance (aircraft, radar, riverine operations). The rest is spent on research and the acquisition of materiel.<sup>14</sup>

### ***The Supporting Military***

The DOD missions are supported by the joint commands, their service components, and the reserve components. The military is playing an important role, though a modest and carefully delineated one, both overseas and at home.

Overseas, the regional US commanders-in-chief are the principal conduits for providing military support to DEA and other US agencies supporting US ambassadors and host-nation counterdrug forces. They support detection, monitoring, and interdiction efforts and provide resources, as available, in those countries where drug production or trafficking is affecting the United States.

On the domestic scene, active and reserve component forces, particularly the National Guard, support a wide range of drug law enforcement agencies (DLEAs), including local police and sheriff departments, state bureaus of investigation, and federal agencies such as the US Customs Service, Bureau of Land Management, the DEA, the FBI, and the US Border Patrol. They also support interagency coordination centers like Operation Alliance in El Paso, Texas, and Project North Star in Buffalo, New York; these and similar centers have the mission of helping to guide the application of military resources that support the DLEAs. For example, US Atlantic Command, through its Army component, Forces Command, directs the actions of Joint Task Force Six (JTF-6) at Ft. Bliss, Texas.<sup>15</sup> JTF-6 coordinates the employment of US federal military support to the supply-reduction efforts of domestic drug law enforcement agencies. When service personnel and units are allotted to JTF-6 for DLEA support, they operate under the tactical control of the task force commander.

National Guard forces employed on the domestic scene, unless federalized, operate under state command and control. The various state counterdrug programs are coordinated by the National

Guard Bureau, supported and supervised by the DOD Coordinator for Drug Enforcement Policy and Support.

## ***JTF-6***

JTF-6 has support responsibilities for the entire United States, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands. (As US Southern Command assumes responsibility for the Caribbean in June 1997, it will also take responsibility from JTF-6 for drug support missions in that region.) Currently, priority of effort goes to the high-intensity drug trafficking areas (HIDTAs), so designated in the National Drug Control Strategy because they are found to be centers of illegal drug production, manufacturing, importation, or distribution that have significant effects on the nation.<sup>16</sup>

JTF-6 neither initiates operations in the law enforcement domain nor supports law enforcement activities unrelated to drug control. For counterdrug support, it responds to requests that have been validated as having a drug connection and have been assigned a priority by civilian law enforcement leaders. JTF-6 terrain analysis and threat information is developed for military units only. DLEAs receive intelligence data through their own law enforcement channels or from elements such as the National Drug Intelligence Center and the El Paso Intelligence Center.

JTF-6 classifies the military support it provides to domestic law enforcement agencies in five categories: operational, general support, rapid support, intelligence, and engineer. It conducted 530 of these law enforcement support missions in FY 1996.<sup>17</sup> Military support for JTF-6 missions enhances individual and unit readiness with real-world training opportunities. JTF-6 provides a wide variety of military support activities, but budgeting and other constraints limit the depth of that support.

Operational support involves military units conducting mission-related training such as ground reconnaissance and sensor employment, aviation reconnaissance and support, and transportation. Ground reconnaissance, for example, consists of two types of missions. One involves covering large terrain areas to find marijuana growing sites or to identify smuggling routes and clandestine airfields. In the other type of mission, forces occupy listening posts or observation posts on likely smuggling routes. The size of the force assigned these missions can be as small as a squad or as large as several hundred soldiers or Marines. They typically avoid civilian contact and rely on night vision devices and daylight long-range vision means to gather information.<sup>18</sup> Of 131 operational support missions conducted during FY 1996, 47 percent were ground reconnaissance, 23 percent were aviation reconnaissance and support, 12 percent were controlled delivery of sensitive drug material, nine percent were medical evacuation, five percent were ground sensor employment, and three percent were transportation.

*General support* is the augmentation of law enforcement agencies with military-specific skills, training, transportation, canine support, communications, technology, and communications. Of 124 general support missions during FY 1996, nearly all (96 percent) were mobile training teams.

*Rapid support* is the immediate response to actionable intelligence. The Rapid Support Unit (RSU) is composed of an Army Special Forces B Team (company headquarters) employing

several Special Forces A Teams. About three-quarters of RSU missions are ground reconnaissance; the rest are mobile training team missions.

*Intelligence support* consists of providing specialists who can assist DLEAs with training and analysis processes. Typical missions include photo imagery interpretation, translator and linguistic support, and analyst support. Intelligence support also includes using trained military intelligence analysts, translators, and linguists to provide DLEAs with enhanced case analysis and language capabilities. During FY 1996, 349 intelligence analysts and translators were provided to DLEAs for missions like drug trafficking organization analysis, link and pattern analysis, intelligence database construction and management, situation briefs, and linguistic support.<sup>19</sup>

*Engineer support* involves road repair and various construction projects. Typical missions include constructing border fences, lighting, and law enforcement training facilities. At Tucson, Nogales, and Douglas, Arizona, 87 miles of roads have been upgraded to assist the US Border Patrol; at San Ysidro, California, engineer-built fencing and roads were constructed to help control the drug traffickers' access to US territory. An engineering assessment of the tunnel built under the border at Otay Mesa to carry drugs from Mexico into California has helped the DLEAs understand ways to combat this unique drug threat.<sup>20</sup> Twenty-four engineer support missions were conducted during FY 1996.

### ***The Information Analysis Center***

In addition to JTF-6, US Atlantic Command provides an Information Analysis Center (IAC) to assist the US Ambassador to Mexico and his country team. The IAC falls under the staff supervision of the Army Forces Command's Director of Operations, and it takes its interagency lead from in-country actions from the country team's DEA attache. The IAC currently has five communications and information analysts, and it will probably add logistical and operations planners to complete its organization at about nine people.

The Information Analysis Center provides a communications link to support country team cooperative programs with Mexican authorities and US DLEAs in Mexico. The IAC develops information products (such as terrain and movement analysis), assists with operational planning, analyzes multiagency counterdrug information, and provides tracking and technical data to Mexican and US DLEAs.<sup>21</sup>

The IAC sustains a round-the-clock communications and analysis center that coordinates overflight and air safety information for US aircraft. It assists the hand-off of counterdrug actions from US assets to Mexican authorities in order to deal with drug criminals within the sovereign territory of Mexico. In this regard, the IAC coordinates support to the Mexican Northern Border Response Force, a Mexican counterdrug law enforcement team that intercepts drug criminals. As the focal point for DOD detection and monitoring requirements for Mexico, the IAC is an important asset for coordinating with JTF-6 on operations that are close to Mexico's northern border. The IAC's communication and coordination functions ensure that counterdrug law enforcement efforts on the US-Mexico border are conducted safely at the tactical level.

## *The Joint Interagency Task Forces*

Several other joint task forces specialize in counterdrug actions. Under the 1994 National Interdiction Command and Control Plan these units were designated as Joint Interagency Task Forces (JIATFs). The JIATFs operate under the oversight of the US Interdiction Coordinator--currently the Commandant of the Coast Guard. US Atlantic Command has JIATF-East in Key West, Florida; US Pacific Command has JIATF-West at March AFB, California; and US Southern Command has JIATF-South, located in Howard AFB, Panama. In addition, the US Customs Domestic Air Interdiction Coordination Center (DAICC) at Riverside, California, was included in the National Interdiction Plan. Each JIATF, and the DAICC, has an organic intelligence-gathering capability, a detection and monitoring mission, and assigned DOD and drug law enforcement personnel.

Operation Laser Strike, a counterdrug operation conducted at the request of the US Interdiction Coordinator, provides an example of the effectiveness of JIATF teams in integrating combined and interagency actions. This operation evolved from the Support Justice (later Steady State) series of programs in the Andean countries in 1991 through 1994. As a part of this early program series, Operation Ghost Zone in the Chapare region of Bolivia showed that combined riverine, ground, and especially air interdiction operations can be effective in stopping the flow of coca product to refiners in Colombia. It was a well-designed combined and interagency plan conceived with the help of planning assistance from US Southern Command.<sup>22</sup> A follow-on operation called Green Clover concentrated detection and monitoring assets in source countries to support interdiction.

Most successful to date has been the interdiction of airborne drug routes, especially in Peru. This can involve initial detection, airborne monitoring, tracking the target, and then host-nation pursuit using reaction forces. Flights of E3C Sentry airborne warning and control system (AWACS) aircraft extend the coverage by US radars that have been located in several South American countries. The AWACS affords a real-time link to host-nation air forces from intercepting drug trafficking aircraft.<sup>23</sup> In 1995 Peru's air force destroyed nine drug trafficking aircraft and seized and forced down two; Colombia destroyed three and forced down or seized 12.<sup>24</sup>

The effect of these kinds of operations against the "air bridge" to Colombia is that coca leaf and base prices paid to coca farmers have dropped. "As a result, an increased number of farmers expressed interest in US AID alternative development programs in the region.<sup>25</sup> Operation Laser Strike, begun in April 1996, continues with increased intelligence support to US country teams and host-nation DLEAs. Meanwhile, however, drug traffickers are finding new routes through Brazil and Bolivia, and the level of cocaine supply to the United States remains steady at some 300-plus metric tons a year.

The US Customs' Domestic Air Interdiction Coordination Center (DAICC) was reorganized under guidelines that restructured the nationwide radar surveillance system to improve coordination of the detection, interception, and apprehension of aircraft that illegally cross into US airspace carrying drugs and other contraband. The DAICC monitors 150 miles seaward

around Puerto Rico and 100 miles seaward around US coastlines, a subordinate operations center in Puerto Rico extends radar coverage into the Caribbean.

In consideration of the Posse Comitatus law, the DAICC provides the law enforcement interdiction and apprehension functions to counter air drug trafficking criminals who enter US territory. The DAICC also provides radar detection and monitoring for the southwest border of the United States. Some emphasis is placed on the northern region of Mexico near the border where air and ground activity indicate a high probability of drug smuggling activity inbound to the United States.

JTF-6, the JIATFs, and the DAICC have proven themselves as valuable interagency coordinating centers for various aspects of the supply reduction strategy. Although we continue to be bombarded by some 300 metric tons of smuggled cocaine product yearly, the actions of these organizations conceivably stop another 300 metric tons from becoming available in the United States.

### ***The National Guard***

The National Guard was an early advocate of military support to counterdrug activities and is an eager and valuable participant. Today the Guard's domestic interdiction program is the largest in DOD. Many states, including Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Kentucky, New Mexico, Tennessee, and Texas, have long been involved in supporting drug law enforcement and have developed considerable expertise in combating the drug trafficker. Virtually all states now have significant counterdrug programs to reduce both demand and supply. On a typical day, the National Guard is engaged in about 1300 ongoing counterdrug missions and has about 4000 personnel on duty to perform them.<sup>26</sup> Guard members on active duty can be found at virtually every major DLEA headquarters.

Unfortunately the National Guard budget was reduced from \$230 million in 1993 to \$158 million in 1996. As one consequence there has been a reduction of Guard-assisted drug interdiction results over the same period: cocaine seizures are down from 78 to 68 metric tons; heroin seizures down from 1508 to 741 kilos; marijuana plants eradicated down from 206 million to 105 million; confiscation of processed marijuana down from 404 metric tons to 373 metric tons.<sup>27</sup> Despite reduced resources, however, there continue to be success stories. In early 1997, at the Port of Philadelphia, a National Guard intelligence analyst supporting the US Customs Service profiled a cargo ship he thought was suspicious. As a result of his work, Customs officials found 15 barrels containing liquids in which almost one ton of cocaine was suspended in solution. Later, in March 1997, Alabama National Guard members using C-26 aircraft with DEA personnel on board tracked a suspect vehicle overland to its destination near New Orleans. Then, by directing DEA agents on ground to the proper site, 500 pounds of cocaine was confiscated.

The National Interagency Counterdrug Institute (NICI) was established by the California National Guard in 1990. It is especially important to the counterdrug effort for its unique courses that help leaders respond to the demand reduction and supply reduction objectives of the National Drug Control Strategy through interagency teamwork. It offers a counterdrug managers' course, which trains students on the process of planning and conducting effective interagency

counterdrug operations in both supply and demand reduction. Students are typically law enforcement, military, and community leaders and planners. Another course, in drug prevention and demand reduction, trains students to develop effective programs in those areas and to integrate the skills and resources found at the federal, state, and local levels. This course focuses on exercises, case studies, and the planning process.

### ***Considering the Options***

What other approaches might we examine? Should DOD cut back its support, continue apace, or even offer increased assistance? Are there any new concepts that could be considered?

It is indisputable that drug abuse and drug trafficking are doing considerable damage to our people and our social institutions, and that the current level of effort is failing to curtail drug trafficking. Furthermore, no credible foreign threat exists or is foreseen that exceeds the magnitude of the drug threat in terms of damage to the social, economic, and moral fabric of American society. Given the dimensions of the drug threat, it seems unlikely that DOD or the services would seek to eliminate or drastically reduce their counterdrug programs. More difficult is deciding whether to maintain the status quo with regard to military counterdrug activity or to develop a more active posture with new concepts for support.

Continuing current programs with expenditures of about \$800 million a year allows for a range of necessary programs, but it is not sufficient to do much in depth. Law enforcement officials at the tactical and operational levels are quick to provide off-the-record evaluations of military counterdrug support: any help they receive is appreciated and valuable, but it can be slow to arrive, is often not available to all who request it, and is generally insufficient to make any lasting change in local drug situations. Our overseas counterdrug support is important and contributory, but thin. For example, the counterdrug strategy is designed to attack drugs at their source, yet only three percent of the National Drug Control Strategy budget, and 20 percent of DOD funding, goes to overseas efforts. In times of austere budgeting, only small increases to the counterdrug budget can be expected, but there are other initiatives that could be considered.

### ***Rethinking the Counterdrug Force***

Without significant reductions in either the demand for drugs or their supply, the drug problem will continue to plague the United States. Some shift in emphasis or increase in effort seems appropriate, but can the military establishment step up to the challenge? A reassessment of our current support concepts and organizational design suggests that an increase in the tempo of counterdrug operations by both the active and reserve components is warranted. Here are some concepts for consideration.

- Enhance the policy and resource integration clout of the DOD Coordinator for Drug Enforcement Policy and Support. This position deserves assistant secretary status in its own right to increase its authority and signal DOD's interest and support for the President's National Drug Control Strategy.

- Establish a Counterdrug Joint Task Force (CDJTF). Just as we specially organized our counterterrorism effort, we could also form a CDJTF to act as the executive agent for drug enforcement policy and support, primarily to improve unity of effort. As a functional subunified command (perhaps under US Atlantic Command), the CDJTF would be responsible for translating DOD counterdrug policy into counterdrug support. The drug scourge has proven to be a more immediate threat than terrorism; the counterdrug effort deserves a place in the front rank of military priorities.

A standing CDJTF could maintain the skills and experience to deal with some 50-plus National Drug Control Program agencies, private organizations, the states and territories, the military services, the National Guard Bureau, and the unified commands. It would have operational and drug law enforcement support responsibilities for the United States and its territories. For matters within host nations, the CDJTF would take on a support and coordination role, helping the regional commanders-in-chief while coordinating with key US government bureaus and agencies. It would also integrate the efforts of the JIATFs and coordinate with the US Customs DAICC.

- Designate the Commander CDJTF as the US interdiction coordinator and let him assume the responsibilities outlined in the National Interdiction Command and Control Plan. If having a US interdiction coordinator is important, then we should consider giving the job to an operational commander. Presently it is an additional duty of the Commandant of the Coast Guard; this key job should be the sole responsibility of whomever it is given to.

- Use JTF-6 and elements of the Joint Staff's Counternarcotics Division to provide the building blocks for a CDJTF operations center that could assume a comprehensive counterdrug support mission. Invite liaison officers from other drug control program agencies (e.g., US Customs, Drug Enforcement Administration, Border Patrol, and so on) to join the team.

- Expand participation in the national counterdrug effort. In coordination with the Office of National Drug Control Policy, the State Department, and the federal drug law enforcement agencies, explore ways for new or increased military support. Concepts worthy of evaluation include assisting the US Border Patrol in monitoring the US-Mexican border by providing additional aerial platforms, ground surveillance, and engineer and communications support; providing greater foreign drug intelligence support; and augmenting US Customs Service inspectors with more National Guard personnel to assist at the various ports of entry nationwide. As potential areas for increased military support are identified, we should seek the funding and force structure augmentation required. Even in this time of constrained budgets, the chances are good that Congress would support a well-conceived interagency counterdrug initiative.

As national security experts continue to evaluate the global environment, strategic assessments will likely include the issues concerning transnational threats such as drug trafficking, terrorism, international organized crime, and failed or failing nations. The drug threat will loom large in any such assessment. This is a good time to consider moving away from a joint force mostly organized around regional domains (in the style of World War II theaters) in favor of small functional joint commands that can rapidly deal with the interagency and transnational aspects of these threats. A Counterdrug Joint Task Force seems an appropriate match to an imminent threat.

## ***Reconsider Federal DLEA Organization***

It may make little sense to reorder military resources under a CDJTF to improve support for drug law enforcement agency missions unless the DLEAs can ensure focused and coherent counterdrug action. Certainly, it is neither possible nor desirable to restructure state and local law enforcement organizations; besides, they are making progress through participation in various multiagency counterdrug task forces formed at regional and local levels. However, the federal law enforcement effort needs some retooling if military support and other national resources are to be used effectively.

Just as the President would not permit the Army, Navy, and Air Force to go off to war without unified direction, he should not allow the Border Patrol Customs Service, Immigration and Naturalization Service, and others involved in counterdrug efforts to operate in close proximity without regard for a regional strategy and campaign plan. What is needed at the regional level is unified action of the DLEAs under a single civilian leader.

Priority should be given to bringing order to our efforts along the southwest border where the greatest drug trafficking now occurs. A "joint" law enforcement headquarters is needed there, one with the requisite command authority and operating budget to integrate the efforts of the many federal agencies involved. Operation Alliance could be transformed into a new interagency headquarters with an operational mission.

Federal DLEAs could be "sending agencies" that provide the specialized teams needed in the counterdrug effort. Each agency guards its special roles and missions, but counterdrug efforts need to be integrated according to a coherent plan under a single director. For regional efforts such as along the southwest border, it is time to move the operational direction out of Washington and into the hands of a single civilian field director.

It is arguable that our overseas counterdrug effort needs a more unified focus too. But the coordination among ambassadors' country teams and the regional commanders-in-chief has achieved a modicum of unity of effort, making this requirement secondary to our need for greater unity of effort at home.

## ***To Protect and Defend***

Under normal circumstances, halting drug trafficking is a job that falls solely within the realm of civilian law enforcement, but should we accept the current circumstances as normal? The profound damage wrought by drug trafficking in Colombia and Mexico is evidence of the devastating nature of this threat. It is time to acknowledge the magnitude of the problems being created by the drug trade at home, and it is time to bring them under control. The authors recognize that demand reduction is the ultimate answer to solving the drug problem. However, unless a concerted and well-publicized supply reduction campaign is conducted simultaneously, there is little hope of reducing drug abuse and drug-related violence to a level tolerable to American society.

While the Department of Defense is just one voice in the government, it should express deep concern over the drug threat to national security and indicate its willingness to become more involved in supporting the drug law enforcement agencies. Now is the time for a more active and positive military role. It is simply the right thing to do.

Members of the military services are sworn to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States, and thereby the nation, against all enemies, foreign and domestic. As the Quadrennial Defense Review proceeds, and strategic documents are proffered in open forums, let us hope that these studies and documents accurately reflect the mortal danger posed by the drug trafficker--he is at present our most formidable enemy.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>. Regarding the phrase "kill people and break things," see Don M. Snider, "U. S. Civil-Military Relations and Operations Other Than War (OOTW)," in *Civil Military Relations and the Not Quite Wars of the Present and Future*, ed. Vincent Davis (Carlisle, Pa: Strategic Studies Institute, 30 October 1996), p. 4. The article observes that the services can be expected to resist embracing OOTW missions because "such missions do not reflect the essence of the military's *raison d' être*, to fight and win the nation's wars. The military's purpose is to kill people and break things, and other instruments of national power should take on collateral missions such as nation-building and humanitarian relief."[BACK](#)

<sup>2</sup>. R. Jeffrey Smith, "Spooked by the Shadow of Somalia, the Pentagon is Ready to Pull Out of Rwanda After Delivering Much Less than the U.S. Promised," *The Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, 12-18 September 1994, p. 16.[BACK](#)

<sup>3</sup>. For examples of concerns, see Jim McGee, "Military Seeks Balance in Delicate Mission: The Drug War," *The Washington Post*, 29 November 1996, p. 1; and Timothy J. Dunn, *The Militarization of the U.S. Mexico Border* (Austin, Tex.: Center for Mexican-American Studies, February 1996), Ch 4. Dunn's thesis is that militarization of the counterdrug effort represents "the use of the military and its resources to control targeted groups of civilians" (p. 143).[BACK](#)

<sup>4</sup>. Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), Drugs and Crime Clearinghouse, National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCIRS), *Drugs & Crime Data, Fact Sheet, Drug Use Trends*, NCJ-160044 (Rockville, Md.: GPO, July 1996), p.2. Reference states that at least 19.2 million persons reported use of illicit drugs at least once in 1995. Data were derived from the National Household Survey of Drug Abuse (NHSDA), which is considered by many to give conservative estimates of drug use in the United States.[BACK](#)

<sup>5</sup>. US Department of Health & Human Services (USDHHS) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), National Household Survey of Drug Abuse (NHSDA) 1992, 1993, 1994, and the 1995 NHSDA Highlights from SAMHSA; available from <http://www.samhsa.gov/oas/nhsda/ar18t003.htm>; accessed 16 October 1996.[BACK](#)

<sup>6</sup>. William J. Clinton. *The National Drug Control Strategy: 1996* (Washington: GPO, 1996), p. 41.[BACK](#)

<sup>7</sup>. The exact figure on drug babies is not well established. ONDCP has published a conservative range of 100,000 to 300,000. A California study of women giving birth found that 5.2 percent of mothers tested positive for illicit drug use just prior to delivery of their babies. See William J. Clinton, *The National Drug Control Strategy, Reclaiming Our Communities From Drugs and Violence* (Washington: GPO, February 1994), p. 11. Also see Clinton, *National Drug Control Strategy: 1996*, pp. 12, 41; and *National Drug Control Strategy, Strengthening Communities Response to Drugs and Crime* (Washington: GPO, February 1995), p. 29. Drug use deaths include those from drug use itself, plus drug-related AIDS, injury, homicide, tuberculosis, and Hepatitis B and C. See also SAMHSA, NHSDA, Cocain use, available from <http://www.health.org/pubs/95hhs/cocaine.htm>; accessed 23 November 1996.[BACK](#)

<sup>8</sup>. John C. Lawn, former Administrator, Drug Enforcement Administration, "Drugs in America, Our Problem, Our Solution," *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 15 March 1986, p. 323.[BACK](#)

<sup>9</sup>. Michael Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts, A Statistical Reference to Casualty and Other Figures, 1618-1991*, Vol. II, 1900-1991 (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1992), pp.1216, 1322. US killed in Korea were 33,870; US battle deaths in Vietnam were 47,072. [BACK](#)

<sup>10</sup>. Barry R. McCaffrey, Director, Office of National Drug Control Policy, ONDCP Homepage: available from [http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/EOP/ondcp/html/ondcp\\_plain.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/EOP/ondcp/html/ondcp_plain.html); accessed 10 September 1996.[BACK](#)

<sup>11</sup>. William J. Clinton, *National Drug Control Strategy, 1997, Budget Summary* (Washington: GPO, February 1997), p. 19.[BACK](#)

<sup>12</sup>. Dick Cheney, former Secretary of Defense, letter, Department of Defense Guidance for Implementation of the President's National Drug Control Strategy, Washington, 18 September 1989; also Memorandum for the Commanders of the Unified and Specified Combatant Commands, Washington, 18 September 1989.[BACK](#)

<sup>13</sup>. William J. Perry, Secretary of Defense, Memorandum, Department of Defense Guidance for Implementation of National Drug Control Policy, Washington, 27 October 1993. See also Perry, *Annual Report to the President and the Congress* (Washington: GPO, March 1996) p. 9.[BACK](#)

<sup>14</sup>. Department of Defense, Office of ASD SO/LIC (DEP&S), *Comprehensive Review, DoD Counterdrug Program* (Washington: DEP&S, September 1993), pp. 56-74.[BACK](#)

<sup>15</sup>. US Army, Forces Command, Counterdrug Division, AFOP-OD, Point Paper, Joint Task Force Six (JTF-6) Counterdrug (CD) Support Responsibilities, Atlanta, 19 September 1995.[BACK](#)

<sup>16</sup>. High Intensity Drug, Trafficking Area Program, Fiscal Year 1997, "Memorandum, Executive Office of the President, Office of National Drug Control Policy, Washington, November 1996. Richard Y. Yamamoto, Director HITDTA Program, Office of National Drug Control Policy, Executive Office of the President, has identified the current HIDTAs as New York City; Los Angeles; Miami; Houston; the Southwest Border (counties of Southern California Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas); Washington-Baltimore; Puerto Rico-US Virgin Islands; Atlanta; Chicago;

Philadelphia-Camden; Rocky Mountains (Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming; Gulf Coast (Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi); Lake County, Indiana; Midwest (Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and South Dakota); and the Pacific Northwest. Also, interview by authors, Washington, 19 March 1996.[BACK](#)

<sup>17</sup>. Colonel Thomas R. Kelly, USMC, Deputy Commander, JTF-6, briefing and discussion, El Paso, Tex., 19 August 1996; additional data provided by Lieutenant Colonel Jesse Costa, U S Army, J3, JTF-6, via email, 15 January 1997.[BACK](#)

<sup>18</sup>. Joint Task Force Six, Operational Support Planning Guide (El Paso, Tex.: JTF-6, 1 July 1996), C-8.[BACK](#)

<sup>19</sup>. JTF-6 Command Briefing, El Paso, Tex., 20 August 1996.[BACK](#)

<sup>20</sup>. Otay Mesa tunnel, interview with California National Guard personnel and observations, Otay Mesa, Calif., August 1995.[BACK](#)

<sup>21</sup>. US Army, Forces Command, Director of Operations, Counterdrug Division AFOP-OD, Point Paper, Information Analysis Center, Mexico City, Mexico (Atlanta, 1 October 1996).[BACK](#)

<sup>22</sup>. Operation Ghost Zone, the model for later operations was developed by then US Army Major Chick Garland working on a planning assistance team with the DEA.[BACK](#)

<sup>23</sup>. Captain Lisa Allen, 961st Airborne Air Control Squadron, US Air Force, in-flight briefing aboard E3C Sentry AWACS (over Peru, 28 September 1995).[BACK](#)

<sup>24</sup>. Colonel Bruce Cucel, USAF, Director, Counterdrug Division, J-3, U S Southern Command, briefing and interview, Howard AFB, Panama, 27 September 1995.[BACK](#)

<sup>25</sup>. ONDCP, President's Council on Counter-Narcotics, *Department/Agency Reports: Implementing the 1996 National Drug Control Strategy* (Washington: 28 May 1996), p. 43.[BACK](#)

<sup>26</sup>. Colonel David Friestad, Air National Guard, Director, National Guard Bureau Counterdrug Directorate, interview, Washington, 20 March 1996.[BACK](#)

<sup>27</sup>. "Budget Reductions, Impact on National Guard Counterdrug Program," briefing to authors at Counterdrug Directorate, National Guard Bureau, Washington, 20 March 1996.[BACK](#)